



Keeping Motivated to Exercise

We know the benefits of **regular** exercise and indeed experts argue that “little and often” has a greater positive impact on our health and wellbeing than high intensity workouts done infrequently. Despite the fact that it is well publicised that we should put more activity into our lives to remain fit and healthy, it’s not easy to stick to a regular routine. Here are a few tips to help you identify what motivates you and to get you successfully started.

Identify What Motivates You

For some people the key motivator is disease prevention. If a friend or family member has been affected by heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, osteoporosis, or cancer, that may be what motivates you to stay healthy and avoid the same path. Regular exercise reduces your risk of developing these and other diseases and will help you maintain a healthy body weight.

For others, living longer and better could be a motivator. Research has shown that exercise may extend the years of your life but also importantly the life in your years! It can greatly enhance your quality of life by making regular day-to-day physical activities such as climbing stairs, carrying the shopping and keeping up with the kids easier.

For many people it the fact that we look better when we exercise regularly that’s the key motivator. Great posture that can come from regular exercise gives the impression of youth and regardless of weight and size can enhance body image.

Identifying a goal is another important motivator. You may not want to sign-up to run a marathon but setting a realistic goal for yourself can be a powerful motivator. That might be to walk or jog to a certain point in town so many times a week or it may be that you want to fit into a favourite item of clothing again by your birthday or completing a local charity walk. What ever your goal, make it SMART (specific, measurable, actionable realistic and time-linked)

Understanding what it is that really makes a difference to you and reminding yourself of it when you feel de- motivated is key.

So, what motivates you?

Getting Started

How you start to build more activity into your life may impact on your likelihood of sticking to it. How many of us have started something in the past with great intentions only to give up a month later? Hands up!! . These tips may help.

- Reward yourself when you achieve a goal no matter how small. You’re on track!
- Vary the sorts of activities you get involved in. Variety is the spice of life!
- Set yourself a time goal for exercise each day...even if it’s 10 minutes.
- Think about how great you will feel when you have done the activity or exercise rather than how you’ll feel whilst you’re doing it.
- Don't feel guilty when you miss a session or two. Negative feelings will only hinder your motivation. Getting back on track will make you feel better.

- If boredom is hindering you try doing something with a group or a buddy. Conversation will make the time fly by.
- Distractions -- such as reading, listening to music, or watching television while you work out -- can also help keep you motivated.
- Try exercising at different times of day and work out which times suits you best. Are you a morning or evening person? There's no point convincing yourself you'll get up at 6am for your morning walk if you're a late-to-bed-late-up person. Be realistic, perhaps an early evening slot may suit your natural routine better

Other tips include:

- Scheduling several sessions with a personal trainer.
- Joining an exercise class that has a lively instructor.
- Persuade a friend to exercise with you.

Overall, it's important to not get discouraged if you miss a week or two of exercise. It's never too late to get started again. When your program gets derailed, try to figure out what went wrong and learn from your mistakes.

Best of luck and keep exercising!